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## The effects of the growth environment on the adolescents' self-esteem, general intelligence and emotional intelligence

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### Abstract

This paper aims to investigate the level of self-esteem, of general intelligence and emotional intelligence of adolescents raised in foster care compared with a group of adolescents raised in normal family environments.

According to studies, the lack of family environments, together with the negative characteristics of child placement centres prevent the normal development of teenagers, thus having serious repercussions on them throughout their life. The objective of this paper is to reveal the differences between the two groups. The participants for this research were 70 adolescents: 35 adolescents chosen from regular families and 35 teenagers who were raised in foster care institution. The age of subjects was between 16 to 19 years old. In order to test a difference between the two groups there were used three tests: The Rosenberg scale for self-esteem determination and the I3 test for emotional intelligence and general intelligence. The results are showing differences between the two categories: adolescents raised in a normally family environment had higher marks at self-esteem, general and emotional evaluations.

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## 1. Introduction

Most of the studies show that adolescence is the most important period of lifetime of reaching independence. In 2008, Clerget was concluding that three types of independence are developed in this period: the economical, the emotional and axiological. Acquiring independence is very complex process because of the interaction between the individual, his family and the society. To observe social models is a part of childhood, to implement them is a characteristic of adolescence (Clerget, 2008). The development of intelligence in the way of abstract thinking allows the social and axiological systems to get in control in this period. Domains like philosophy, politics, human morality, concepts like honesty, friendship and religion are just a few in which the adolescents would be interested (Sterberg, & Detterman, 1986).

## 2. Premises

The intellectual development will give the individual the possibility to confront ideas and to express them in relevant forms. In this period (between 17 and 18 years old) the thinking will have a hypothetic-deductive structure (Piaget, & Inhelder, 1968). A constant intelligence depends on an appropriate medium. The effects of medium tends to get permanent even if they are positive or negative. By the age of 15 years old this could be measurable (Hebb, 1966).

The role of the family in laying the foundation of emotional intelligence is a crucial one. The way the parents react in some particular situations will influence the development of coping strategies. It was proved that children whose parents have higher levels of emotional intelligence also have a good level of it, being friendly, sociable, emphatic, and conscious about their feelings. On the other hand, the ones who have parents with low levels start with a deficit which could be compensated. If his family talks about feelings the adolescent will learn to identify and express them in an appropriate way (Elias, Tobias, & Friendlander, 2012).

The beginning of self-esteem is correlated with the appearance of self-consciousness, but the adolescence will be a step in confronting the beliefs of the individual with the reality (Rosenberg, 1965). It is considered that the social perception and the self-esteem are in correction. The opinion of the others will influence the self-esteem level and also the self-esteem level will influence others' opinion (Golu, 2012).

## 3. Objectives

The main objective of this study is to reveal a difference in terms of self-esteem, general intelligence and emotional intelligence according to growth environment.

## 4. Hypothesis

I proposed a set of three hypotheses, in conformity with the objectives mentioned before: there are significant differences between the growth environment and the level of self-esteem; there are significant differences between the growth environment and the level of general intelligence; there are significant differences between the growth environment and the level of emotional intelligence.

## 5. Variables

I've used as dependent variable the level of self-esteem, level of general intelligence and level of emotional intelligence. As an independent variable I've used the growth environment.

## 6. Subjects

For this research were recruited a total number of 70 subjects, 35 adolescents raised in foster care and 35 adolescents raised in a normal family with both parents. The subjects were recruited in their high-schools and in a foster care institution, also here were collected the results.

The mean age for the first sample ( $n = 34$ , 20 girls and 15 boys) was 17,5 years ( $SD = 3.21$ , range = 16 to 19 years). For the second sample ( $n=34$ ) the mean age was 17 ( $n=34$ , 24 girls and 11 boys).

## 7. Research instruments

The participants were asked to participate at this study by their teachers or counselors, the high-school pupils were asked to fill in some informations and to send them via e-mail. After this the tests were applied in the class-room and in the group activity of foster care adolescents. There were two high-schools involved in this study and one foster care institution, both from the capital of Romania, Bucharest.

The Rosenberg Scale is formed of 10 items, 5 which are listed in order and 5 items which are reverse listed for quotation. The score vary between 1 and 4 points. The final score is the sum of the 10 items. The minimum score could be 10 (very low self-esteem) and the maximum could be 40 (very high self-esteem) (Rosenberg, 1965).

The Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire is also formed of 10 items, everyone containing 4 response options. The quotation is made by summing the answers at this 10 items and the result will be compared with a standard (Baron, 1997).

The General Intelligence Test I3 was first known as the „American Army Test Alpha” founded by Robert Yerkes in 1917. In 1971, Bontila adapted the test for Romanian population. This test could be applied also individual and in group. It is made of 8 subtests, each referring to a different type of intelligence.

## 8. Result interpretation

After collecting the measures we performed a T test procedure for independent samples for each of our dimensions: self-esteem, general intelligence and emotional intelligence.

We provide below the descriptive statistic tables for all the variables of interest:

Table 1 – Descriptive statistics

Cod		N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. Error Mean
SE	1,00	35	35.2351	5.75426	1.05441
	2,00	35	24.7643	4.61987	.96754
IQ	1,00	35	121.4875	8.78974	1.89453
	2,00	35	95.6452	7.23902	1.26874
EQ	1,00	35	123.7545	42.75318	7.50962
	2,00	35	80.7623	39.87952	6.97610

The t-test procedure was performed in order to reveal differences between the two samples:

Table 2 – Independent sample T test

		Levene Test					T Test					
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	Mean dif.	Std. Error Dif.	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
SE	Equal variances assumed	3,893	0.05	9,635	68	,000	10.49	1.11652	Lower 9,35	Upper 15,90		
IQ	Equal variances assumed			2.762	0.03	32.438	68	,000	11.89	2.79634	Lower	Upper

									70,35	79,90
EQ	Equal variances assumed	1,924	.029	6,067	68	,000	11.69	9.12658	Lower 46,37	Upper 79,93

This results are showing a difference between the two samples for all variables, difference that shows that adolescents raised in foster care (the 2nd sample) have lower scores at this three variables than the ones raised in normal families. (SE:  $m=24.7643 < 35.2351$ , IQ:  $m=95.6452 < 121.4875$ , EQ:  $m=80.7623 < 123.7545$ )

## 9. Conclusions

As expected, we've obtained positive significant differences between the two samples. From a psychological point of view, the adolescents who were raised in a normal family, have a positive attitude for themselves, great expectations for life, they are assuming risks and wants to become better and better in what they do. Those raised in families are more sociable, they do not make comparisons between themselves and others being sure of the success of their actions and also being capable to reconsider a strategy in case of failure. On the other hand, lower scores at adolescents raised in foster care describes a high level of inhibition, avoidance, unable to take risks because of the anxiety of failure. They have a lower self-esteem because their actions weren't been validated in their childhood. The feeling of being rejected, excluded by the others is a constant their emotional life. The results revealed for the general intelligence shows one important fact for human beings: it doesn't matter so much the level of intelligence but more than this the stimulation made by the environment. The family role of laying the foundation of emotional life was revealed by our results.

## 10. Further directions

In the family the parents and the teenagers discuss about feelings and they learn to express them in an appropriate way. Models for assuming feelings and face them will be presented by parents and discussed in the family, thing which does not happen to the ones raised in foster care.

In conclusion these results are important for paying attention to the foster care programs which may substitute in a way the normal family. A good way of integration these adolescents would get to lower rates of deviation and a better life for these individuals.

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